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RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 2031
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 1415
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RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 2527
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [KDEM](#) [TX](#)
SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: DONORS COMPARE NOTES ON HUMAN
RIGHTS AND RULE OF LAW PROJECTS AND PROPOSALS

REF: A. ASHGABAT 0638
[1](#)B. ASHGABAT 0436

[1](#)1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

[1](#)2. (SBU) SUMMARY: Representatives from several Western embassies and international organizations met May 16 at the British embassy to compare notes on current and planned projects that focus on human rights and the rule of law. Attendees learned that a wide variety of projects are underway that will focus in particular on facilitating legislative reform, developing expertise and capacity, and developing legal resources. UNDP and OSCE have also succeeded in engaging the government on electoral reform issues in advance of December 2008 Mejlis (parliamentary) elections. Donors appear to be finding a number of areas where the government is open to cooperation, and the level of cooperation is likely to expand. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)3. (SBU) British Ambassador Peter Butcher hosted the first of what are to be quarterly meetings of Western and international donors to share information on program activity in the areas of human rights and rule of law. Participants included representatives from the French and U.S. embassies, EU-TACIS, a visiting Central Asia program manager from the EU's EuropeAid Cooperation Office, Europa House, UNDP, Germany's GTZ, and OSCE.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Ambassador Butcher reported on a number of UK proposals the government of Turkmenistan is now reviewing: study visits to build human capacity on conforming to international standards, and a proposal to develop an "ombudsman for human rights." The UK has also proposed a project to improve the function of the citizens' complaint department within the Institute for Democracy and Human Rights, as well as to develop an exhibit on using media to raise public human rights awareness. The UK embassy hopes to work with GTZ to assist with revision of the penal code, and has also proposed capacity-building work with Turkmen prison

officials on human rights standards. Other projects include a publicly-accessible legal resource center and an English-language self-study center that will open in June. EU representatives noted their interest in providing additional support to several of these projects and also discussed whether Europa House could oversee the projects (Ref. A).

15. (SBU) French Ambassador Christian Lechervy reported on a plan to organize the visit of a "human rights ambassador" before the end of the year. Such a visit would be an annual event, designed to underscore the priority the French government places on progress on human rights issues. The embassy is also developing a scholarship program to send Turkmen students to provincial French universities, and possibly also to the Franco-Turkish University in Istanbul. The first scholarship winners will begin their studies in Fall 2009.

16. (SBU) Deputy Resident UNDP Representative Inita Paulovica reported that UNDP will soon begin a new election reform project that seeks to build expertise and capacity on election issues for members of the Central Election Commission. The project also envisions providing civic education training on elections, as well as training modules for potential candidates, all in advance of the December 2008 Mejlis elections. She said that UNDP is also seeking to expand its work with Turkmenistan's government to develop expertise on the management of disability rights.

17. (SBU) OSCE Human Dimension officer Benjamin Moreau noted
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OSCE's cooperative work with UNDP on conducting a legal review of Turkmenistan's law on elections, and added that OSCE will also have the opportunity to review the revised draft law for compliance with international standards. OSCE has proposed to review the constitutional draft as well for its compliance with international standards, but has not received a response. Recently, however, OSCE was able to send six Turkmen government lawyers to Warsaw to attend a constitutional justice seminar.

18. (SBU) The project manager of German technical cooperation organization GTZ, Laurence Fara, discussed some of the details of the memorandum of understanding (MOU) that GTZ signed with Turkmenistan's government in 2007. The MOU provides for expert assessment of the criminal procedure code and opportunities to provide recommendations for the family code and the penal code (Ref. B). GTZ will also assist Turkmenistan's government to create a public register -- i.e., government-held documents that are made accessible to the public. Fara noted that GTZ will be sponsoring a conference on habeas corpus issues at the end of June, and added that the MFA has asked GTZ to organize an international law conference with EU and experts from the former Soviet states that may take place as soon as September, although specific areas of focus have not yet been determined. GTZ will also assist the government to reform the civil procedure code beginning in 2009.

19. (SBU) COMMENT: This ad hoc donors' meeting provided a good snapshot of the work that western missions and organizations are doing to help Turkmenistan move into the 21st century on human rights and justice issues. A number of areas have been identified in which Turkmen counterparts, particularly at the Institute for Democracy and Human Rights, are increasingly ready to cooperate. Donors appear to be ready and willing to support and even expand on those opportunities. END COMMENT.
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